

March 19, 2010

Washington, DC – AARP, America's largest advocacy organization for seniors, has officially supported the health insurance reform legislation expected to be considered by the House. The legislation will lower prescription drug costs for seniors, improve the quality of care, and strengthen Medicare for generations.

"Seniors deserve health insurance reform that will lower prescription drug prices, make care more accessible, and strengthen Medicare – and the health insurance plan achieves these goals and more," said Rep. Luján. "The AARP's support of health insurance reform legislation reinforces what we already know: this proposal will help seniors in New Mexico and across the country."

FULL LETTER OF SUPPORT BELOW

March 19, 2010

Dear Representative:

We, like you, hear countless stories every day from our members who have been denied health insurance coverage or can't afford their prescription drugs or health insurance premiums. Health care remains among the most important and personal economic issues for the vast majority of Americans. We have come too far in this debate to turn away from this historic opportunity to address a health care system badly in need of reform. AARP therefore urges you to vote in favor of the health insurance reform package. Older Americans and our families urgently need the improvements the legislation will provide.

The legislation includes many vital provisions for which there has been a long history of bipartisan support, including expanded access to affordable quality coverage, barring insurers from discriminating against people with pre-existing conditions, lowering prescription drug costs, promoting prevention and wellness, advancing delivery and payment system reforms to reward quality rather than quantity of care, and strengthening efforts to fight fraud, waste and abuse.

The legislation also achieves key priorities for older Americans, including:

- Protecting and strengthening Medicare's guaranteed benefits, lowering seniors' prescription drug costs by closing the Medicare Part D coverage gap, eliminating barriers to prevention, cutting waste, fraud and abuse, and improving the long-term financing of the program;
- Cracking down on insurance company abuses, such as denying affordable coverage because of age or health status and setting arbitrary caps on how much care they will cover;
- Providing affordable coverage options to millions of Americans and small businesses through newly created "exchanges," as well as added help for businesses and individuals who cannot afford coverage; and
- Helping Americans to better plan for their future long-term care needs and receive services to help them live in their own homes and stay out of costly nursing homes.

Health expenditures consume roughly one sixth of our nation's economy today, and will reach 20 percent within seven years if current trends continue. These skyrocketing costs have been straining the budgets of families and businesses as well as the government - crowding out other priorities - as health care costs continue to grow 2-3 times faster than general inflation. That is why all the major health care stakeholders have come to the table to solve this problem - it is simply unsustainable. We cannot afford to wait another year to enact health care reform.

Delay will only mean more Medicare beneficiaries will not be able to afford the drugs they need; millions more of our family members and neighbors will become uninsured; billions of additional dollars in uncompensated care costs will unfairly shift to those who do have coverage; more individuals will too often be forced to impoverish themselves to get the health and long-term care services they need; and skyrocketing costs will continue to strain even more family, business, and government budgets.

We cannot afford to continue with the status quo and have come too far to fail now. The legislation establishes a solid foundation from which to make further improvements to our health care system in the future. Both the economic and physical health of our members, their families, and our nation are at stake.

Thus AARP urges Members of Congress to vote in favor of the Health Care & Education Affordability Reconciliation Act of 2010. Because AARP members have a strong interest in how their elected officials vote on key issues, we will be informing them about how their Representatives vote on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Addison Barry Rand

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